

## Service to Alumni and to the General Public

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EVERY DAY one makes numerous value judgments, whether or not he is completely conscious of them. They may relate to whether a thing or act is good or bad (ethics), beautiful or ugly (aesthetics), true or false (logic), or utile or useless (pragmatism). One's vocation determines which category of judgments will preoccupy him. If there is any category of judgments which is predominantly the concern of librarianship, it is undoubtedly the last. This conclusion can be explained by a consideration of the criteria for judging libraries themselves.

All libraries are judged essentially upon one attribute—*service*. Both the quantity and quality of service are considered when a library is evaluated. The library administrator judges each policy, existing or proposed, upon whether or not it is useful in promoting the services he wishes to be representative of the particular library he administers. Then value judgments of the library administrator are pragmatic, being judgments based upon whether or not a policy, procedure, position, person, or thing is useful in increasing service. It should be well understood that all aspects of a library serve the library's clientele in some manner. The cleanliness of the building as provided by the janitors is a service to the clientele. Prompt acquisition of materials needed by the clientele is another service. Anticipation of the needs of the patron is a selection service and is just as meaningful if the need is anticipated by 50 minutes or 50 years. The catalog is a service; the lending of library materials is a service; the availability of reference assistance is a service. What the resulting evaluation of a library is, depends upon the variety and quality of the services given by it.

In the academic (i.e., college and university) library, service is primarily geared to the library's primary patrons, namely, the students and the faculty. Life, never being as simple as one may some-

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### *Service to Alumni and to the General Public*

times wish it, has made it possible for students to graduate and become alumni, to be replaced by subsequent classes of students who in due time become members of an ever enlarging body of alumni. There are a number of factors which assist in determining the degree to which an academic library may be called upon, or may desire to offer, to serve the institution's alumni. The urban academic library tends to have a greater number of alumni who are potential patrons than does the rural one. The professional (e.g., law, medicine, theology) academic library tends to have more potential alumni users than does the general academic library. In both instances the proximity to an academic library of public, special, and other academic libraries, coupled with the adequacy of these other libraries, will proportionately raise or lower the need or demand for service to alumni.

Similarly with the faculty and students of other institutions, the nearer institutions are to one another, the more use will be made of them commonly, or will be asked for, by the faculty and students of all of the institutions. While this situation is more typical of the urban centers, the situation common to both urban and rural academic libraries is the student home for the holidays who wishes to use the library of his home town college or university. The general public, that is, the persons who should normally be expected to use the local public library, often use or expect to use the services of the academic library. The proportion of use again is dependent upon the proximity and adequacy of the public library in comparison with the academic library. The farther away the public library is from the academic library, and the less satisfying its collection, the more general public which the academic library can expect to ask for service. The same is true of high school students, especially if the school libraries are either nonexistent or inadequate.

The question would seem to be whether or not an academic library should offer service to its alumni and the general public. The answer is a qualified "yes." The academic library should give as much service (quantity), and the best service (quality), in as many ways (variety), to as many persons (universal service) as possible, consistent with precedence as required by the educational purposes of the parent institution and financial responsibility. It would be desirable to give unlimited service, but such a plan is not feasible. Why not? Because of the limitation placed upon this solution by the amount of money available to implement it. There is a simple equation: the more money = the more service.

When funds are scarce, certain services must be eliminated, or if never provided before, must remain as a possibility for the future. Services must be relative to the amount of funds budgeted to support them. Services must be limited accordingly in quantity, quality, variety, and application. The real question, then, is not whether or not to offer service to the alumni and the general public, but what is the precedence of services consistent with the institution's educational purposes? Obviously, these purposes will vary the precedence and in some cases eliminate services which one might hope would be offered. Excluding special purposes peculiar to certain institutions, it may be assumed that the common purpose is educating the student body and that another purpose should be the sharing of knowledge with the academic community to the best of the institution's ability.

It is beyond hope that all will agree with the precedence of services hereinafter proposed. Nevertheless, it is offered as a criterion for comparative purposes.

(1) *Administration*. It may be taken for granted that there must be an administration to organize any library.

(2) *Space*. A library must have sufficient space in which to function and offer its services.

(3) *Collection*. No variety of services will be of any use whatsoever without the books and other materials basic to all other subsequently listed services.

(4) *Selection*. A collection is worth little if it is not continually added to with a definite, justifiable purpose.

(5) *Acquisition*. The handmaiden of selection.

(6) *Cataloging*. It would be possible to function as a library with only the first five essential services. This sixth service is the first of those which could be eliminated if finances so dictated. True, the library could not function well, but it could function. The libraries of most academics (or for that matter, most personal libraries) exist with the first five requirements and lack this sixth convenience. The college or university library is a cooperative venture intended to serve the faculty and students of the institution, much as if the faculty and students pooled their personal uncataloged libraries. But with increased size and impersonal connection comes the need for organization of the collection and an index to that organization.

(7) *Circulation*. In order to be used the cataloged collection must circulate. In an academic library where the clientele are sup-

### *Service to Alumni and to the General Public*

posed to be intelligent, this service should take precedence over other services not yet named.

(8) *Reference*. The academic library has a variety of services. It has five basic services and three highly desirable (but not essential) and commonly offered services, reference being the last of these.

(9) *Universal application*. One of the most difficult tight ropes of decision a library administrator must walk is the one that has the universal application of services to all comers on the one hand, and an increase in the quality and quantity (depth) on the other. One cannot say that quality and quantity should take precedence over universal application. The latter should come first until it becomes a financial burden. Then it must be stopped or slowed down to reasonable limits. It is for this reason that so many university libraries now charge substantial fees to faculty and students of other institutions who wish to use their services.

(10) *Variety*. Variety of service takes the bottom rung on the precedence ladder. It is a matter of local needs as to which additional service is to be added. It could be interlibrary loans, photoduplication, provision for smoking, or any of a number of other services which could be given if they are not now given. Also, local needs may make it desirable to increase the depth of service in one or more of the eight common services in preference to an increase in variety. Whether additional funds are to be spent upon space, books, staff, or equipment is an administrative decision that can be made only with consideration of local conditions. There is no general rule of precedence applicable.

There is one obvious observation which can be made. The amount of money required for services numbered two through six above is dependent upon the number of books, while for services numbered seven and eight the amount is dependent upon the number of readers. Budgets should be calculated accordingly.

The order of precedence of services is based upon a rational decision of the dependency of one service upon another and the resulting conclusion as to which ones could be spared. The obvious rebuttal is that in an *academic* library, without all eight services the library would not be academic. The answer is that there are, for example, academic libraries in Latin America which are not cataloged, in Japan which do not circulate, and in the United States of America which give no reference service. It is a matter of where one "draws the line." The offering of services is dependent upon the availability of funds.

Most academic libraries manage to have funds sufficient to offer the eight common services with varying degrees of success. Many can afford to offer these in depth and with variety.

The academic library should be as generous as it can be in offering its services to the alumni of its institution and to the general public. Knowledge is not a commodity to be bought and sold in the market place. The academic library as a service unit of a college or university should be placed in the financial position of being able to pay the institution's obligation to the community. In the larger communities, the academic library should not try to compete with the public library for the privilege of serving the general public. The public library can and should do it better. But in the small town in which the academic library may find itself, it is foolish for the public library to try to compete with the academic library by trying to match its collection. The academic library should serve the public's need for the uncommon books. Geographical location determines obligation.

In general, the academic library should not serve the high school or elementary grade student (although it is impossible to prevent the faculty and staff from borrowing for their children) since it tends to stifle the growth of school libraries. However, it should serve the "honors" high school student who cannot find the materials he needs in his school or public library. This is really done in enlightened self-interest, being merely educational pump-priming.

The rest of the general public should be liberally served, with the exception of government officials for an analogous reason to that for which high school students are an exception: it tends to stifle the growth of the public (or municipal) library. Again, the size of the community would be a determining factor. In any community an institution cannot ask for gifts from within the community without expecting to be obligated to repay them with knowledge in the form of library or other services.

Alumni are part of the general public, and all that has been said of it applies equally. It is only when library finances do not permit extension of services to all of the general public that alumni should receive preferential consideration because of their enduring affiliation with the institution. There is here a subliminal assumption that the alumnus enjoys the distinction of graduation from a distinguished academic institution, while reciprocally the institution enjoys the reflected glory of his success and shares in his material accumulations. If this is

### *Service to Alumni and to the General Public*

not the case, generally, then alumni cannot be distinguished from the general public.

Faculty of other institutions should be treated with equity. If it can be afforded, photoduplication should be provided without charge to the faculty of the parent institution and visiting faculty as well. Prompt and liberal photoduplication would eliminate much of the need for faculty to travel to the library with unique material, and for that matter, much interlibrary and local lending of material. Knowledge cannot be hoarded. When in the form of library materials, it must be shared. Possession determines obligation.

There has not been in this discussion a compilation of statistics of what is done at various academic libraries, because the writer feels that the concern should be with what *should* be done rather than what *is* done.

It might seem that this discussion of service to alumni and the general public has wandered rather far afield, but that is not really so. It has examined the opinion that as much service as possible should be offered to alumni and the general public consistent with financial responsibility. It has stated that financial responsibility requires a hierarchy of services which take precedence over other services and that service to alumni and the general public comes low on the list. While services to these groups *should* be given, whether or not they *need* to be given is a matter of local decision dependent upon geographic location, proximity to other academic libraries, and local service requirements. Whether or not they *can* be given is dependent upon wealth.